



Midstream

Lynn Sloan

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In Lynn Sloan's luminous novel *Midstream*, a woman's comfortable, enviable life is upended.

In 1974, Polly is thirty-four. The US simmers in discontent. Vietnam protests and feminists who demand equal rights and pay are disturbing reminders that all is not as it should be. Though she feels suffocated by the doublespeak, false enthusiasm, and exhausting jockeying for positions that she encounters in her career, Polly clings to the security of her job as a picture editor for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. She is unwilling to risk her reliable paycheck, comfy Chicago apartment, and much admired, often absent war correspondent boyfriend by throwing herself into the fray.

Then a mysterious letter arrives, reminding Polly of who she once was: a fearless woman with wide dreams. She is forced to question who she is and what she really wants. Though she dusts off her shelved hopes, she realizes that being true to herself may require letting go of her comforts to follow the risky road that's opening before her.

The sensitive prose makes both the characters and the worlds that they inhabit shimmer with life. The language is clear and crisp as it focuses on the concerns of creative, twenty-first-century women trying to make it in corporate environments that are dominated by men. Rapid-fire conversations pair with colorful descriptions to invigorate Polly's world: there are observations of a technicolor sky "dotted with whipped cream clouds" and of "eyes [a] disturbing ... eerie light blue, too light, like glass, the whites around the irises marbled with red veins."

Midstream is a sophisticated, insightful novel in which a woman on the cusp of becoming a cog in the corporate world awakens, finding the courage to reclaim her lost dreams.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July / August 2022)

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